

Testimony Before the House Armed Services  
Subcommittee on Terrorism, Unconventional Threats and Capabilities

The Honorable Thomas W. O'Connell  
Assistant Secretary of Defense  
Special Operations / Low-Intensity Conflict

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Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify about our nation's Special Operations status and aspects of our current Special Operations Forces (SOF) posture that allow the U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) to play a leading role in our nation's current campaigns.

As you know, Title 10, Section 138 requires my position to provide civilian oversight of special operations activities of the Department of Defense. I attempt to ensure that our SOF are appropriately tasked and employed and that senior policymakers, to include our interagency partners, understand their capabilities as well as their limitations. Not only am I an advocate of the USSOCOM and SOF, I am also dedicated to ensuring our elements continue to be the best trained, best equipped, most flexible and effective fighting force available to our country. I consult closely with General Brown on a wide range of policy issues and participate in the USSOCOM Board of Director's meetings, the Command's executive resource body. This effort produces a SOF program and budget that stress force readiness and sustainability, and provides sufficient force structure to meet the demands of the geographic combatant commanders and General Brown in

his role as the supported commander in the Global War on Terrorism. I'd like to recognize the superb effort of General Brown's Deputy Commander, Vice Admiral Eric Olson, for his SOCOM team's work on the Quadrennial Defense Review. SOCOM was well prepared by General Brown to present an objective blueprint for SOF growth and posture. They put a Combatant Commander's fingerprints on their efforts rather than an Assistant Secretary's and I believe they were highly successful in negotiating the challenges of the Pentagon's QDR process. A key component of that strategy has been the unwavering support of members of this committee, the full House and Senate in delivering the necessary support, Congressional oversight, and critical review for SOF programs and initiatives. We've had successes and, yes, some setbacks with our programs, but I believe we've taken a prudent course in building capability.

Let me address what that capability might look like as we move forward with this international struggle. We are faced by a network--sometimes structured--of radical extremists who inflict terror with minimal concern for their innocent victims. These networks will migrate to places where they can survive, operate and grow. Our challenge then is to develop counter-networks to monitor, isolate, disrupt, and destroy hostile elements. SOCOM has started this process. Through an ingenious series of liaison elements, interagency intelligence and operations centers, and superb collection, analysis, and direct action nodes operating with partner nations, our SOF elements have performed successfully against high value individuals in the CENTCOM (Central Command) Area of Responsibility. Just as importantly, our Army Special Forces, Army Special Operations Aviation

Forces, Army Rangers, Navy SEALs and Special Boat Units, Army Civil Affairs, Army Psychological Operations units, Air Force Special Operations crews and staffs, Combat Controllers and Weather Teams, have served CENTCOM requirements very well from their counter-insurgency and foreign internal defense roles in Afghanistan and Iraq to their work in the Horn of Africa. Most importantly, SOCOM Forces operate in the only environment that can lead to success: Joint, Interagency, Combined, and Coalition.

My position in the Pentagon gives me a unique perspective on a number of activities that are slowly but surely moving together to match national and military strategies.

- On the Stability Operations front, we've seen advances in authorities that will allow greater efforts in train and equip missions, peacekeeping initiatives, and capacity building while partnering with Department of State. Section 1206 of the 2006 Defense Appropriations Act permits the Department to work through the Joint Staff and Combatant Commanders closely to develop initiatives that can be implemented this year.
- Our Counternarcotics (CN) portfolio provides very robust authorities that permit maximum flexibility for Combatant Commanders as they develop tactics, techniques, and procedures to combat smugglers, pirates, narco-terrorists, money launderers, etc. Our foreign CN training efforts are proving a valuable adjunct to our counterterrorism efforts. Our close partners from the British Special Operations Forces now assist a key Afghan Counter Narcotics element that has been highly successful in seizures over the last year.

- Our Resources and Technology Directorate played a key role in assisting with the development of the Major Force Program 11 budget and continued superb supervision over the Technical Support Working Group, managed through our Combating Terrorism Technical Support Office. Synergies have developed that permitted real advancements in IED detection and defeat as well as improving tagging, tracking, and locating capabilities.
- The Section 1208 Authorities granted by Congress last year are being used effectively by the command to build indigenous capabilities essential to developing counter networks. And we're going to get smarter and better at using them.

Coupling these elements together with increasing SOF capability and a flexible basing and rotation strategy will meet the demands of the Secretary and the President as well as the nation as the unknown unfolds.

As the command undergoes stressful periods of change during a shooting war, there will remain one constant: the importance of the special operator. In terms of missions performed and in the qualities of the individuals who undertake those missions, the special operator is truly unique and requires a different type of mindset on our end in terms of planning and support. Our starting point has always been and must continue to be what we call the "SOF Truths," which are essentially statements of the fundamentals:

“Quality is better than quantity. Special operations forces cannot be mass produced. Competent special operations forces cannot be created after a crisis occurs. And, humans are more important than hardware.” I pay special tribute to the superb non-commissioned officers of the command who live and enforce these truths every day.

These truths have been reaffirmed by the awe-inspiring performance of our Special Operations Forces in Afghanistan, Iraq, Colombia, the Philippines, and many other countries around the world. I hope one day we may be able fully to tell their story. They could not meet their mission requirements without the superb support of the Secretary, the Department Staff, the Joint Staff, and the Military Departments.

It is also with the support of Congress that USSOCOM has moved so far and will continue to do so.

The FY2007 President's Budget Submission for USSOCOM is \$5.2 billion (excluding Military Pay), an increase of 27% over the FY 2006 submission. The FY 2007 President's Budget Submission continues to strengthen the command, reflecting QDR guidance to increase USSOCOM's military capability and capacity. It will enable USSOCOM to: 1) add over 1300 personnel to find, fix, and finish terrorist networks; 2) maintain sustained operations in areas where terrorist networks are operating; 3) continue the investment in critical fixed-wing and rotary-wing aircraft that provide SOF with the mobility necessary to deploy and to execute their missions quickly; 4) invest in additional active component Civil Affairs and PSYOPS force structure; and 5) support the newly created Marine Corps Special Operations

Command (MARSOC), providing USSOCOM greater flexibility and capability to fight terrorism.

This FY 2007 increase is essential to support the Department's QDR decision to increase SOF capability and capacity to conduct low-visibility, persistent presence missions and a global unconventional warfare campaign. I would like to thank this Committee and the Congress for your support of this nation's Special Operations Forces. Your continued interest and support of the FY 2007 President's Budget Submission will be essential to sustain this critical funding for USSOCOM.

I would like to conclude by highlighting the implications the posture, programming and policy for SOF in the war on terrorism have for all aspects of our nation's defense. Our Special Operators have often been the innovators for the larger military, and the SOF mindset has been the incubator of innovation. That is especially true today. With the shift from SOF being postured for reactive, regional contingencies to being a global, proactive and preemptive force, we are witnessing a key evolution in how we must conduct our security affairs in the future and address those "ungoverned spaces," and build capacity to deal with those who would harm our country.

Most of all, we must realize that we are not in a "battle of ideas;" we are in a "test of wills."

Finally, a personal note –repeated from last year. Whenever possible, I attend funerals of SOF personnel at Arlington National Cemetery. It is

indeed a high honor to represent the Department of Defense. When I look into the eyes of widows, children, parents and other relatives of our fallen heroes, I understand that there is no “quit” in their demeanor. We must honor their service and sacrifice. They are an inspiration to all who witness their courage and spirit. Your support is critical to the success of our Special Operations Forces. I thank you for your careful scrutiny of our program and budget. Together, we can continue to help move our Special Operations Forces into a position of prominence that will continue to press the fight against America’s enemies. Thank you. I welcome your questions.